

Co-Chair Formica, Co-Chair Osten, Co-Chair Walker, and the distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Joseph Larcheveque and I am proud to serve the 21,000 students of Bridgeport Public Schools as the Chair of the Board of Education.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this written testimony and to highlight the critical financial state of our district. For many years city and state budgets have included less than optimal funding for Bridgeport Public Schools. This has placed extraordinary demands on our facilities, programs, and staff and touches every Bridgeport public school student. In fiscal year 2016-17 we were forced to eliminate crucial educational, safety and support services in order to meet our non-discretionary budget obligations. These included but were not limited to removing paraprofessionals from our kindergarten classes, eliminating home school coordinators and school resource officers, and greatly reducing the number of guidance counselors and support professionals.

Even with those drastic reductions we are facing a nine million dollar deficit in fiscal year 2017-18 secondary to rising non-discretionary costs. If uncorrected, we will be faced with the grim task of implementing further cost-saving measures that will directly impact the lives and futures of our students.

Bridgeport Public Schools motto *Changing Futures and Achieving Excellence Together* drives the Board of Education, our outstanding staff, parents, families, and community stakeholders to work together to provide the quality education our children deserve, despite the financial obstacles. For far too long Bridgeport has been forced to stretch dollars and dreams, forcing our teachers and staff to beg and borrow to provide the most basic educational needs for our kids.

For the decades following Horton v. Meskill, Connecticut has fallen far short of the promises of a sound, fair and equitable school funding formula. There is guarded optimism with the recent CCJEF v. Rell decision however we cannot wait as the case is appealed. To put it simply, money matters to our school children.

Governor Malloy's budget address offered hope as an emphasis was placed on correcting the inequity in urban school funding. Since the proposed budget has new line items and modified formulas that influence the way current adjustments are calculated, it is difficult to determine at this time if our district will receive more funding which is so desperately needed.

The Bridgeport Public School District is held to the same regulatory standards by the Department of Education as any other school district. Our teachers are held to the same evaluation measures. We hold our students to the same state and national measures of academic success. Most importantly, we expect every child to graduate high school college and career ready.

Because of a lack of dollars, our students continue to fall behind and their futures threatened. I implore you to ensure that Bridgeport is funded fairly, based on the needs of our children, of your children. I stand ready and willing to assist in any way.

Thank you.

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